

Speak up & be heard

CONSUMER REGISTER lists summaries of major consumer proposals before Federal agencies. If you wish to submit written comments, include your name & address, state the name & *Federal Register* citation of the proposal on which you are commenting and explain your views briefly & clearly.

Imports

July 4 is the new deadline for comments on a Treasury Dept. review of rules governing merchandise imported into the U.S. The deadline was extended from June 4 to allow more time for comment on this proposal [CONSUMER REGISTER: June 1].

The review concerns proposed broadening of the rules under which foreign goods may be determined to be "dumped" on the American market. When "dumping," or underpricing, is found to exist, the law provides that additional tariff duties may be imposed if such imports are harmful to U.S. industry. Higher duties usually increase the price of merchandise in the U.S.

The review by the Treasury Dept. is to explore whether "dumping" should be redefined to include cases where goods are sold on the U.S. market at wholesale prices below cost of production and whether those prices are lower than for the market in the country of origin.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 5, page 9125, & June 8, page 11475; CONSUMER REGISTER: June 1. Send comments to the Commissioner of Customs, 2100 K St. NW, Washington, DC 20226.

Charter trips

New Civil Aeronautics Board rules go into effect this summer to stop instances in which persons who left the U.S. on charter trips found—after their arrival in a foreign country—that no provision had been made for their return flight to the U.S., a flight for which they had already paid.

CAB officials say such strandings often occurred when charter organizers sought to avoid a CAB rule: The airline hired by the charter organizer for a round-trip flight must receive full payment for the departing trip and the return trip before leaving the U.S. To skirt this rule, some charter organizers charged passengers for a round trip but actually chartered 2 one-way flights. They paid only the airline that operated the outgoing flight and not the one chartered for the return flight. Then, if the organizer went out of business before the return trip, he was not able to pay the return airline. Thus, passengers were stranded.

Under the new rule, the airline that has been hired to provide only the one-way transportation from the U.S. must, before departure, confirm that the airline hired for the return flight has received full payment. To avoid last minute problems before departure, an airline must confirm the payment to an airline for the return trip at least 15 days before departure in the case of a paneload charter and 30 days before departure in the case of a split charter (a trip chartered by more than one chartering group).

The rules will apply to paneload charters scheduled

to leave the U.S. after July 6 and to split charters scheduled to leave after July 21.

Flights leaving after June 21 but before the applicable dates of the rules are subject to a special requirement: Payment for the return flight has to be confirmed at some time prior to the departing flight but confirmation may be obtained right up to departure time.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 6, page 11235.

Fish sticks, etc.

July 10 is deadline for comments on a Commerce Dept. inquiry into new processing methods for frozen fish foods, such as fish sticks or portions.

Within the last few years, equipment has been developed to separate fish flesh from bone & skin. The fish flesh obtained with the new equipment is a mass of small pieces & particles that can be processed into rectangular blocks. These blocks can then be further processed into fish sticks and portions.

In the past, most fish sticks & portions have been made from whole fish fillets rather than small pieces and particles.

The department is seeking comments on the need for a set of standards to regulate fish food products processed from fish pieces & particles. In addition, it is seeking comments on precisely what standards would be appropriate and how the new products made from pieces & particles should be labeled for identification by consumers.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 10, page 11683. Send comments to Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, Commerce Dept., Washington, DC 20235.

Lead in gasoline

July 14 is the new deadline for comments on an Environmental Protection Agency proposal to reduce the amount of lead in gasoline. This represents an extension of the original May 23 deadline.

Under the proposal, service stations, which make about 65% of gasoline sales, would be required to offer a "lead-free," "phosphorus-free" grade of gasoline by July 1, 1974. Under the regulations, lead-free gasoline could contain no more than 0.05 grams of lead per gallon; phosphorus-free gasolines could contain no more than 0.01 grams of phosphorus per gallon.

The EPA proposal also would have a gradual reduction of lead in regular and premium gasolines.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 14, page 11786; CON-

SUMER REGISTER: March 15. Send comments in triplicate to the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Air Programs, Environmental Protection Agency, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852.

Natural gas

July 15 is the new deadline for comments on a Federal Power Commission proposal that could affect the price of natural gas to consumers.

The FPC proposal calls for an "optional procedure" for pricing natural gas. At the present time, sales by natural gas producers to pipeline companies are regulated by the FPC's area pricing regulations. Under these regulations, prices cannot exceed ceilings set by the commission for each geographic area in which natural gas is produced.

The proposed "optional procedure" would allow a producer to apply to the FPC for a certification to make sales at prices higher than the ceiling. To become certified, a producer would have to show that his higher rates would serve the "public convenience and necessity." The optional procedure would only apply to contracts made on or after April 6, 1972. Once a producer made a contract under the optional procedure, he could not ask the commission for further rate increases for the natural gas supply covered by the contract.

FPC officials hope that the pricing proposal will "stimulate and accelerate domestic exploration of the nation's gas reserves."

Details—Federal Register: April 13, page 7345, & June 14, page 11787. Send comments to Federal Power Commission, Washington, DC 20426.

Children's sleepwear

July 15 is deadline for comments on a Commerce Dept. proposal to develop a new flammability standard to apply to sleepwear normally worn by children ages 6 through 12.

The standard would cover pajamas, nightgowns or robes sizes 7-14 and fabrics intended for use in the sleepwear. Commerce officials say that the most frequent victims of fires involving sleepwear are between the ages of 1 & 12. About 40% of these victims are between ages 6 & 12.

The department is seeking comments on the necessity for the new standard and proposed terms of a new standard, including labeling that might be adopted.

A Commerce Dept. standard governing sleepwear sizes 0-6x will go into effect July 29, 1973, to bar from the market any children's pajamas, nightgowns or robes in sizes 0-6x that do not pass a flame-retardancy test established by the department. Between July 29, 1972, and July 29, 1973, the standard will require garments that do not pass the test to have a warning label.

Details—Federal Register: June 15, page 11896. Send 4 copies of comments to the Assistant Secretary for Science & Technology, Commerce Dept., Washington, DC 20230.

Fair credit reporting

July 20 & 21 are set for Federal Trade Commission hearings on the commission's proposed interpretations of the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

The law is to prevent misuse of information about a consumer's credit rating. The FTC interpretations are intended as guidelines to clarify the law. The original interpretations, proposed March 8, were scheduled to go into effect May 8, but the commission postponed the effective date to hold hearings and to propose new amendments.

The interpretations concern

- **Credit guides**—The original FTC interpretation would prohibit distribution by credit bureaus of guides listing consumer credit ratings. Under a newly proposed amendment, certain credit guides with their texts written in code or symbols could be distributed.

- **Protective bulletins**—Under the original interpretation, bulletins that identify check forgers and others sought by law enforcement authorities could be distributed to those who give consumers credit. Under a newly proposed amendment, the bulletins could not be distributed by trade associations and other private organizations, but could be distributed only by public agencies or officials.

- **Loan exchanges**—The original interpretation would require that consumers be informed when they are denied credit on the basis of information furnished by loan exchanges. Usually the loan exchanges merely identify creditors who hold a consumer's outstanding account. A prospective lender then contacts the creditors for more detailed information. Under a newly proposed amendment, it is made clear that the FTC considers reports of a loan exchange to be similar to the reports of a consumer reporting agency, thus being subject to the consumer safeguards of the law. A consumer would have a right to know the name of the loan exchange and a right to make a written request for the nature of the information given to the prospective lender.

- **Motor vehicle reports**—The interpretation requires that when an insurance company uses a state motor vehicle report to deny or increase the cost of a consumer's insurance, it must inform the consumer of the vehicle report.

- **Prescreening for direct mail solicitation**—The interpretation would forbid consumer reporting agencies to prescreen prospects for credit worthiness for direct mail solicitations.

Details—Federal Register: June 15, page 11903. Hearings are scheduled 9:30 a.m., FTC building, 6th & Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC.

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